

**Remarks**

Applicants are grateful to the Examiner for the indication of allowability of claims 9, 11-13, 16-18 and 20-22. However, in retrospect, applicants submit that the previously pending claims were unclear. In particular, the recitation in the previously pending claims of "two optical networks ... each network being arranged to carry its respective set of channels in an opposite direction to that of the other network with respect to the nodes" was unclear in respect of the fact that each of the two optical networks themselves comprise two "sub networks", one for input channels (add) from nodes and the other for output channels (drop) from nodes. The Examiner will see from figures 4 and 5, and the corresponding passages in the specification that there are in fact four optical networks providing input (add) channels and output (drop) channels in each of the two opposite directions. The new claims have been drafted to bring out this feature more clearly. It is submitted that no new issues are raised by this clarifying amendment.

Applicants submit that the claimed feature of four optical networks distinguishes the present invention from the prior art ring architecture of figure 1. The Examiner will see from figure 1 that even if one considers channels in opposite directions to be "separate" optical networks, there are only two such optical networks in the prior art arrangement. Thus, the features of the invention as presently claimed cannot be obtained by merely replacing the dielectric filters as the Examiner has argued.

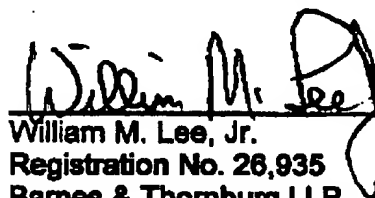
The Examiner will also note that the previous recitation of periodic interleaving filters as a limitation of all claims has been generalized to splitters or couplers where appropriate. The original claims recited splitters and couplers and the amendment to periodic interleaving features was in response to the Examiner's previous rejections. Applicants submit that this generalization has no impact on the patentability of the newly presented claims since the clarified feature of there being four optical

networks now distinguishes the present invention over all of the prior art previously cited by the Examiner.

In conclusion, it is submitted that the present invention is both novel and non-obvious in respect of the prior art cited and favorable reconsideration of the newly presented claims is requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William M. Lee, Jr.", is written over a horizontal line.

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